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ABSTRACT

The "Writing Buddies" program is designed to allow students from one grade level to write, edit, publish, share, and celebrate their success with peers from another grade level. Students also benefit from the strengths of two teachers and parent volunteers. The role of the teacher is to provide the atmosphere conducive to writing, and to allow and encourage students to seek other means of support for their writing. Students also become more comfortable with the computer as they type, edit, and publish their pieces. Teachers interested in setting up a Writing Buddies program need to find a colleague who is also excited about the writing process and is interested in combining classes to explore writing. Teachers should design a management system that works for them. The program developers found that the more they empowered the students and developed the program around students' ideas and needs, the smoother the program went. Having the students meet twice a week worked well. Parent volunteers worked in the computer area, allowing teachers to concentrate on conferencing with writers. Materials needed include at least one computer per teacher and a laminating machine to reinforce the covers of the books published. To make the program more memorable, each year the developers hold a celebration for the Writing Buddies involving videos, pizza, and the sharing of writing. (RS)

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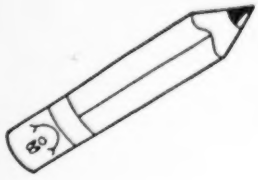

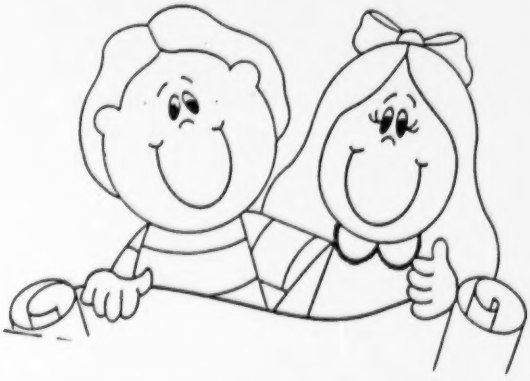

# " WRITING BUDDIES"

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# WRITING BUDDIES

Writing Buddies is designed to allow students from one grade level to write, edit, publish, share and celebrate their success with peers from another grade level. We had a third and fourth grade combination. This opportunity adds excitement and extended growth in the area of writing. Students also benefit from the strengths of two teachers and parent volunteers, thus having more extensive resources availble.

## OVERALL PROGRAM GOAL

The goal for initiating the Writing Buddies project between two different grades is to gives students the opportunity to build upon what they already know, and the go ahead to complete a piece of writing using their buddy as a resource. This in turn, give each writer the satisfaction of working through the steps of publishing. Also, this process allows and encourages buddies to communicate in a positive and caring manner by conferencing on their pieces.

## TEACHERS' ROLE

The role of the teacher is to provide the atmosphere condusive to writing, and to allow and encourage students to seek other means of support with their writing. Journals are use twice weekly by students to communicate with the teacher, sharing

successes, problems, feelings, etc. Teachers dialogue with students via the journal on a weekly basis in addition to checking in with each pair of writers during writing time.

OUTCOMES

Students gain confidence in themselves as writers and speakers as they communicate their thoughts to the audience intended.

Students become more comfortable with the computer as they type, edit and publish their pieces, sometimes working side by side with a parent volunteer.

A great sense of achievement and self-esteen is boosted each time students finish a story, poem etc, especailly when they share a completed piece to an audience. Students working together become empowered and take intiative to use the dictionaries, thesauri, encyclopedias, and other resourse materials as they work on their pieces of writing.

PROCEDURES AND INSTRUCTIONS

Find a colleague who is excited about the writing process and is interested in combining their class with yours to explore writing in a different and more meaningful way.

Plan several ice-breaking activities which allow students, teachers and volunteers

to get acquainted before the Writing Buddies program takes place.

Design a management system that works for you. (Who works with who? How will the students be divided between each teacher? What are your guidelines and expectations for each set of buddies? Do they know the steps for publishing?)

Decide how you will communicate with students individually. (We gave each student a journal that would be used as a vechicle to express personal successess, feelings, problems, etc. This allows each writer another practice in writing and allows the teacher to model writing by answering back in the student's journal once a week.) It is important that the journal be confidential between student and teachers.

Let the program begin. (We found that the more we empowered the students and developed the program around their ideas and needs, the smoother the program went.)

Plan whole group share circles throughout the year.

Celebrate!!!!!!

TIME

We felt that getting together twice a week to work and write was efficient. We agreed that forty-five minutes of writing would be just right for third and fourth grades. However, many variations are also acceptable. Students would look forward to each Tuesday and Thursday afternoon. On the days we wouldn't meet, teachers resumed their own styles of teaching writing.

OUTSIDE RESOURCES

We found it a great help to have a parent or adult volunteer working in the computer area. S(he) would be available to help with the spelling, editing, typing, or whatever was needed to help students in the publishing of their pieces. (This would allow the teachers the time to concentrate on the conferencing with writers prior to publishing on the computers.)

MATERIALS

1. The Writing Buddies project requires the availability of at least one computer per teacher, a printer, and wordprocessing software. This year's students found the Children's Writing and Publishing Center by The Learning Company and Microsoft Works by Microsoft Corporation. Many of our third and fourth graders really enjoyed and benefitted from the spell check available with the Microsoft Works.

2. A laminating machine which will reinforce the front and back cover of each book published.

3. (optional) A camera available and enough black and white film to take a picture of each writer including the teachers is helpful. This is a good way to kick off the first piece of writing because each student writes their own author's page, edits, publishes and shares in a share circle. The black and white photos glued to

the authors' pages copy very nicely. We copied off author pages and one was used in each book written by that author.

## COST OF PROJECT

The cost of this project is minimal. We used material readilly available for the journals, covers for books, illustrating materials, etc. We found that the most costly part of the program was the film and developing used for the author pages. (We assume that the computers and software are already available.)

## CELEBRATION

To help make the program more memorable each year we held a celebration for the Writing Buddies. Students one year had a sleep-over at the school following an evening of sharing a piece of writing and a positive comment about Writing Buddies to an audience consisting of parents, siblings, friends and relatives. This past year, we had students stay after school. We voted on an appropriate video, and had a pizza party. (Parents were asked to fill out a permission form and return $2.00 to cover the cost of the pizza.) After the pizza party, students gathered in the auditorium to share something that they did in writing that they were proud of to the audience. We felt the celebration was important because it allowed students the opportunity to share to a bigger audience.

WRAP-UP

If you and a colleague are looking to extend your writing program beyond just the writing process, Writing Buddies is a program for you.

Writing Buddies allows students to grow and learn from writing and editing together. They become less dependent on their teachers and more confident in their own abilities, raising self-esteem. Teachers have more time to conference and observe their students. Parents, other than working with students, become more familiar and comfortable with the school's computer system.

EVERYONE who participates in Writing Buddies benefits.